King County

What to do if an employee has COVID-19 – and what not to do

> **Effective July 7, the <u>Governor's Safe Start Proclamation</u> requires employers in King County (in non-healthcare settings) to notify Public Health – Seattle & King County *within 24 hours* if they suspect COVID is spreading in their workplace or if there are two or more confirmed or suspected cases among their employees in a 14 day period. <u>Report cases online</u>.**
>
> **For more guidance, see <u>Checklist for Businesses with Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19</u> from the WA State Dept. of Health.**

Provide next steps to the employee

Tell your employees to take the following steps if they experience <u>COVID-19 symptoms</u>, especially fever, cough or shortness of breath:

- **Isolate immediately.** If an employee is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, they should isolate themselves immediately from others to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.
- **Stay home.** Don't return to work until you feel healthy, where you have gone 24 hours without a fever without the use of any fever reducing medications and improving symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- **Seek testing.** If you have even mild symptoms or have had close contact with a person who has COVID-19, get <u>tested</u>.

Get medical care. Seek advice from your doctor <u>on what to do if you are sick</u>. If you don't have a doctor, call the King County COVID-19 Call Center at 206-477-3977.

Reporting cases and protecting employees' privacy

At this time, most employers are not required to report a single COVID-19 case among employees to Public Health – Seattle & King County. The Health Department will be informed via the healthcare provider that conducted the employee's COVID-19 test.

When employers must report cases to Public Health – Seattle & King County:

- Employers who operate in healthcare and social service settings (e.g., senior living communities, homeless shelters, child care programs) should report cases to Public Health, while maintaining the confidentiality of anyone who is sick.

- Employers in King County in non-healthcare settings must notify Public Health – Seattle & King County **within 24 hours** if they suspect COVID is spreading in their workplace or if there are two or more confirmed or suspected cases among their employees in a 14 day

period.

- If you are a non-healthcare or social services setting, but you think the virus may be spreading through your workplace, please contact Public Health. If one of your employees has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and may have been in close contact with other employees while infectious, notify other employees they may have been exposed, **but do not identify the person who is sick.**

REPORT CASES ONLINE.

Cleaning and disinfection

In most cases, you do not need to shut down your facility. If it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee has been in the facility, close off any areas used for prolonged periods of time by the sick person:

- Wait 24 hours from the last time the employee was in the facility before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential exposure for other employees. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- During this waiting period, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in these areas.

If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Continue routinely cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces in the facility. Follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations.

Cooperate with public health investigators

Effective July 7, the Governor's Safe Start Proclamation also requires employers to cooperate with public health authorities investigating any cases, suspected cases, outbreaks or suspected outbreaks of COVID-19. Any employers who do not follow the governor's proclamation can be cited and fined.

Maintain healthy business operations

1. **Appoint a COVID-19 supervisor** to trace cases in the workforce and alert anyone who may have been exposed. The supervisor should help employees who have tested positive trace their contacts with coworkers. The supervisor should also prepare resources to assist workers who need guidance about how to isolate or quarantine at home. The supervisor must maintain the privacy of employees' protected health information.

2. **Establish flexible sick leave policies and practices that are flexible and supportive**, especially for workers 60 or older or those with underlying health conditions that make them especially vulnerable to the virus. When sick employees can stay home, it prevents the spread to others at work.

3. **Do not require a doctor's note** from any employees with symptoms of COVID-19.

4. **Communicate supportive workplace policies**, such as telework options, employee assistance programs, alternatives to public-facing duties, in the preferred language of employees.

5. **Establish social distancing policies** and practices

Resources

- For further information, contact the King County COVID-19 Community and Business Compliance line at 206-296-1608 or send your questions to coronavirus@kingcounty.gov.

- Detailed information is available from the CDC

Last Updated July 20, 2020